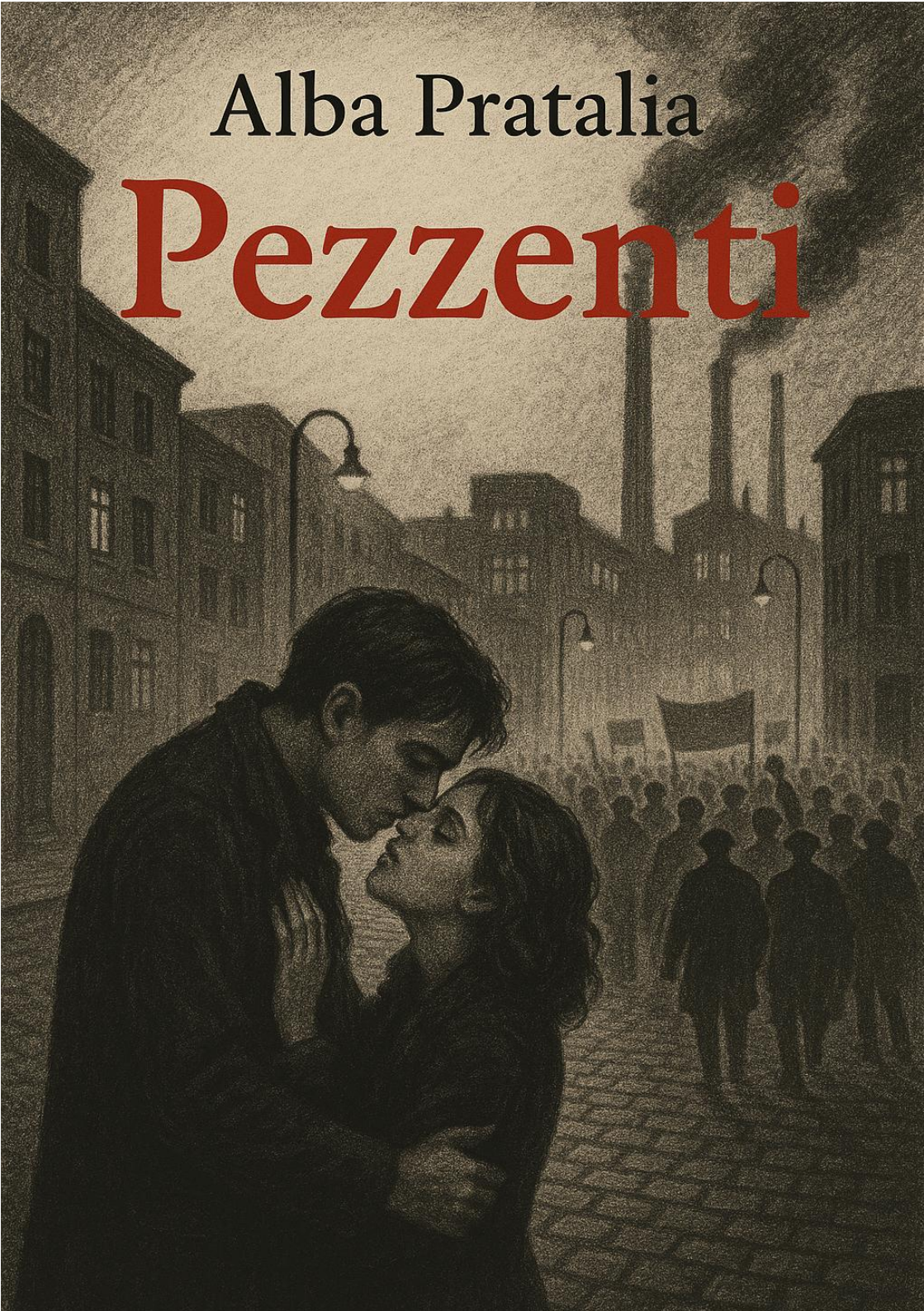
Alba Pratalia

Pezzenti



PEZZENTI

I held her face in my hands, my rough palms trying to memorize the feel of her skin. “Don’t cry, my beauty,” I told her. My voice came out hoarse, worn thin from too many nights shouting over the clang of machines. “If I have to leave… if I have to stay away from you—don’t cry.”

Her eyes were wet, catching the dull glow from the single bulb above us. She started to speak, but I shook my head. “Never cry. Because soon—you’ll see—I’ll come back to you.”

I didn’t tell her I had no idea when “soon” would be. Down there, where I was going, the air would be heavy and wet, and the days would melt into nights until time itself stopped meaning anything. The nights were the worst—long, airless hours filled with the thud of boots, the bark of orders, and the stink of too many bodies pressed too close.

And always, the ache. Not just in my back or my legs, but the ache of not being able to have her for myself. All I knew I'd find there was fatigue. Fatigue, violence, and the cutting edge of racism—sharp as a blade you keep swallowing. But somehow, the misery wouldn't crush me. It never had. It would harden me. It would give me strength I didn't know I had.

Because the anger would grow. It always did. And with it, the hunger—not just for her touch, or the sound of her voice at night, but for something bigger. For the world itself. And when I came back, it wouldn't just be to hold her again. It would be to take what we'd never been allowed to touch.

The cries and groans rose first like a low wind through the streets—our cries, the betrayed common people. It was not the whimpering of the beaten nor the shrieks of the mad, but the sound of a thousand throats declaring enough. In their high chambers, the league of the powerful trembled. Princes clutched their gilded cups tighter,

magistrates dropped their pens, and the lords muttered among themselves that we were rabid, dangerous, criminal.

They were wrong. We were not fools, nor sad creatures, nor brutes stumbling in rage. We were anarchists—militant for the good, sworn to the service of justice and truth. We sought not chaos, but the burning away of error. That was why they had banished us. That was why they named us criminals.

Somewhere beyond the smoke and the clamor, I imagined the sun of the future rising. If only it would rise quickly. We no longer wished to be slaves. We were the children of labor, our skin and lungs marked by its touch, our hearts beating in harmony with its rhythm. We had lived too long in the grasp of vile, greedy masters who stole our bread, then accused us of theft.

They had carved up the cities and the fields with fraud, planted their flags in the soil, and sowed

unjust hatreds between us. These hatreds ripened into wars. And we—those who refused to lie—shouted with one voice that our homeland was the entire world. For this, they called us evildoers.

The church, the state, and the smug, fattened bourgeoisie closed ranks to keep creation from walking the road to freedom. But the day would come—soon—when pope, king, and lord, and the officers who enforced their decrees, would fall. And they would fall at the hands of the very "evildoers" they had cursed.

When that day came, the sun of the future would break open the sky. We would live in peace. We would rejoice in freedom. And no one—no throne, no altar, no ledger—would be left to call us criminals again.

I've worked in all kinds of places. Factories that clung to the mountainsides like rusted-out beasts, their chimneys coughing smoke into the sky. Mills out on the plains where the wind cut through you

like a blade, and the machines roared so loud you couldn't even hear yourself curse. Mines so deep the air tasted like stone and iron, where we sweated until our shirts clung to our backs and our lungs burned.

We gave everything—years of our lives, the strength in our arms, the quickness in our legs. But the fruits of our labor never came to us. We only touched them in passing, watched them carted away to fill someone else's table.

And when we grew old—when our hands shook and our knees gave out—they didn't thank us. They locked us away in charity shelters, lined us up like worn-out tools in a storeroom. They gave us caps with the name of the benefactor stitched in gold, so the rich could display their pity like it was a medal.

But I know this: by nature, we are all equal. There are rights on this earth, though they've tried to bury them under law books and barbed wire. And I've

sworn—along with others—to wage a bitter war against the thieves who live off our backs.

There can be no peace among mortals while one man rules over another. No treaties. No handshakes. Our fiercest enemies are our exploiters, and until they are gone, the fight will go on.

The rain didn't stop for three days. It came down in sheets, running down our faces, soaking through our coats until every movement felt like dragging stone. The bullets came with it—sharp, invisible, snapping through the air. On these mountains, over those hills, down in the valleys where the fog curled like smoke, men fell. Some whispered prayers. Some just stared at the sky. For every man who still had a conscience, the leaving had been painful. And for many, there would be no return.

I thought of the cowards back home—those who stayed warm in bed with their wives, who joked about our "heroism" over wine. They sent us here like livestock to slaughter, but this war was teaching

us something they didn't expect. It was teaching us how to punish.

They called this the "field of honor," this stretch of mud and blood beyond the borders. But we knew better. Here, we died cursing them—calling them murderers. And I swear, one day, the curse will find them.

I tried to speak to my wife in my mind, as if the thought alone might travel home. But she could not hear me. So I turned to the men beside me—my brothers in mud—and told them: if I fall, take care of my children. For I'll die with her name carved into my heart.

The officers, those "gentlemen," had wanted this war. They dressed it up with parades and speeches, but it was nothing more than a butcher's trade in human flesh. They had ruined a generation, spilling youth into the earth like water from a broken jug.

Our homeland isn't marked on any map. It's the entire world, borderless, unchained. Our law is freedom, and in the cage of my chest there's a thought that refuses to bow. It burns there, restless, rebellious.

Wherever someone rises—an exploited soul pushing back against the boot—we are there. We find them, and they find us, and suddenly we are brothers and sisters in the same fight. I can feel it now: the dawn of that enchanted day creeping over the horizon, but it's not gentle. It's sharp, menacing, like the first glint of a blade.

We howl our hunger, our hatred, our pain. It comes from thousands of skeletal faces—faces starved not only of bread but of dignity. And somewhere in the dark, dynamite howls too, its promise ringing in the night with each redeeming crash.

We are already here, standing on the cold pavements of every street. We are the ghosts of the final moment, wearing our deaths like overcoats.

And on our lips, one name—the holy name of anarchy.

We will rise. For every unavenged victim, for every grave without justice, we will answer lead with lead, barricade for barricade. And if we fall, we'll fall in a blaze of glory, tearing open a new road to the future. From the blood—theirs, ours—will come the new history. And in that history, the word anarchy will no longer be a curse. It will be the air itself.

Forward—that was the only direction we knew. We were rebels, yes, but more than that, we were avengers. Not for ourselves alone, but for a world that could be made of brothers, of peace, of work that belonged to the hands that did it.

We were the sons of the workshop, sons of the soil beneath our feet. And now the hour was close—the hour for a different kind of war. Not the wars they waged for borders and kings, but the war of the proletariat. A war without borders.

I could see it in my mind: the free flags snapping in the wind, rising from mountain passes and valley roads. We would descend quickly, in waves, our calloused hands ready to settle old debts.

We were the boldest of the people, the purest flowers—flowers that had not withered in the filth of the hovels they built for us. And as we marched, our voices carried the same words forward again and again: we were fighting for a world of brothers, of peace and work.

We called to those left behind—wives and fiancées, crying far from the edge; mothers, desolate and afraid. “Do not hold your sons back,” we said. “Let them run to the fray. Let them be bold. Only those who risk can tear down tyrants.”

We named our enemies without hesitation: the Duce, the Pope, the King, and all who stood above us. We no longer wanted lords. Everyone would stand equal, each one master of himself.

Still, the chant rolled on, loud enough to drown the fear:
Forward, we are rebels. Fighting for a world of brothers.
Forward, forward, we are rebels. Fighting for a world of brothers.

And we marched into the wind, certain that this time, we would not turn back.